MEETINGS

OF

COLPORTEURS AND AGENTS

OF THE

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

AT

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MEETINGS

OF

COLPORTEURS AND AGENTS.

The intelligent reader will be interested in the facts and discussions of important topics presented in this document. Much light is afforded respecting one of the great departments of effort for the salvation of our country, the principles on which it is pursued, and the character and labors of the men engaged in it. The abundant blessing which God has vouchsafed to the Colporteur enterprise thus far, will be seen in the reports of some of the laborers—especially that of the converted German Romanist Colporteur—and many christian hearts will be gladdened at the recital of some of the incidents of these humble endeavors. The cordial interest awakened on behalf of this work in a few of the principal cities of the West, will find its echo in many churches at the East. An attentive perusal of this pamphlet, it is believed, will reward the reader, and may serve to awaken prayer and effort in behalf of the neglected and perishing.

Meeting of Colporteurs in Western New-York.

This meeting was held at Syracuse, June 10, and was attended by R. S. Cook, Secretary, Rev. L. D. Howell, General Agent, and Messrs. Harwood, Hoyt, Benton, Foster, and Priest, Colporteurs. It was continued three days. The degree of destitution of the means of grace developed in the reports of these laborers, especially along the Lake shore, and in the southern tier of counties, seemed hardly credible; yet it was

the statement of facts coming under their personal observation in visits from house to house. In one county more than one-fourth of the families were found destitute of the word of God, and a much larger number had no other religious book. The Colporteur making this report believed he had visited every house and cabin, however distant from the main road, and had had personal religious conversation and prayer with every family. The secret of his fidelity came out incidentally, in the narrative of his religious experience, in which it appeared that for fifteen years he had never omitted family worship, morning and evening, when at home, or failed to retire at least twice each day for private devotion. Such are the men for efficient colporteurs.

But we must pass by the interesting details of this meeting. A spirited public meeting was held in the 1st Presbyterian Church on Wednesday evening, which was addressed by the Secretary, the General Agent, and Messrs. Hoyt and Harwood, Colporteurs. Ministers and christians present desired farther statements in reference to Colportage, with a view to an effort to extend its influence over Onondaga county; and a meeting was held the succeeding P. M. when much interest was expressed, and a committee appointed to prosecute and superintend the work. A colporteur has since entered this field. Our fellow-laborer, Rev. S. Bliss, Secretary at Boston, joined us at the close of the week.

Meeting of Colporteurs at Detroit.

The Colporteurs in Northern Ohio and Michigan met at Detroit, June 19. Present, the Secretaries from New-York and Boston; Rev. L. C. Rouse, Superintendent; Rev. Messrs. Dixon and Shailer, and Messrs. Holt, Nevins, Sanford and Bondele, Colporteurs. The Presbyterian and Congregational Convention was in session at the same time, and our meetings here were less protracted and less profitable than on other occasions. The failure of crops the last season, and the consequent scarcity of money, with other causes, had thrown some obstacles in the way of the laborers on this field, and they needed counsel and encouragement. The statements in the

Society's Annual Report from this field show the indispensableness of colporteur labors, and reference must be had to the Report for many interesting items, our limits forbidding the detail here.

The ecclesiastical convention afforded an important opportunity of gaining intelligence respecting the condition and wants of the West. Here were about 150 of the laborious, devoted ministers and missionaries, who had been engaged in the pioneer work of the Gospel, in all the N. W. region of the country. Their narratives of the state of religion furnished just the information we needed in forming an estimate of the necessity of colporteur labors and of its adaptation to large masses who are not brought under the influence of the Gospel ministry. Repeated allusions were made to such a necessity, and again and again were the happy results of Colportage, coming under the observation of one and another, remarked upon. In private interviews we were urged to send a laborer here and another there; so that if the advice of judicious ministers on the ground can be relied on, there is occasion for a number of laborers equal to our entire colporteur force, within the bounds of this convention alone.

The Distributing Committee of the Society granted 250,000 pages of Tracts and a box of books, for distribution among the missionaries on this field. Notice having been given in the Convention to this effect, we were immediately thronged with applications, not merely from our beloved missionary brethren, but from other pastors of small churches, with limited means, who needed the help our publications would afford them in their glorious work. In a very little time every page was gone. We seem to see them now, falling like flakes of snow over the prairies and among the forests of that wide territory. May the Spirit bless them and the self-denying men who bear them to the abodes of the poor!

In his address before the Convention, the Secretary alluded to the mischievous influence of the popular press, when Dr. Beecher immediately arose and moved the appointment of a Committee on the subject, who subsequently reported the following resolutions, drafted by Dr. B.

1. *Resolved*, That this Convention regard the employment of the press, in the circulation of a licentious and infidel literature, as

among the most terrific influences arrayed against the christian religion and the morals and liberty of our nation, and not exceeded by the desecration of the Sabbath or the ravages of intemperance.

2. *Resolved*, That this Convention earnestly invites the prayerful attention of christian families to the question, whether they can purchase or receive into their families such reading, without a violation of their public vows to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. *Resolved*, That we do most affectionately request the christian and republican publishers and booksellers of our nation to take the subject into consideration, and see if they cannot, by consultation, come into an agreement to relieve the church of God and our nation from an influence so adverse to the interests of both, and so calculated to eventuate in irreligion, and licentiousness, and revolution, and anarchy, and despotism.

MEETING OF COLPORTEURS AT CINCINNATI.

It may interest the friends of Colportage to give a somewhat detailed account of the proceedings of this meeting at Cincinnati, serving, as it does, as an illustration of the manner of conducting other meetings, and affording an insight into the interior of the colporteur enterprise. We cannot hope to convey to others the impressions made on our minds by this spiritual and instructive interview with brethren of various denominations, of various nations, and with diversified experience. Many things, indeed, interesting in themselves, but of a private nature, thrown out in the perfectly frank, confidential intercourse of the occasion, cannot be reported. All was unconstrained and informal, yet systematic and orderly. The sole purpose of our assembling was to gain and communicate light as to the best way of doing the Lord's work: to perfect ourselves in endeavors for saving souls, through the Holy Spirit's blessing. Many times each day we bowed together before the mercy seat, and united in praising redeeming love. The Spirit's presence was most manifest. All, we trust, were quickened in the divine life, and when the hour of separation came, repaired to their several fields and departments of labor with new zeal and more entire consecration to the service of the Lord.

We assembled at the residence of Mr. Seely Wood, on Mount Auburn, a mile or two from Cincinnati, where we

were wholly uninterrupted, on Wednesday, July 2. Present, Secretaries Bliss and Cook; Rev. F. Y. Vail, General Agent; S. Wood, Superintendent; J. Ermentrout, Jr. German Superintendent, Eastern Penn.; and Colporteurs, Messrs. Spencer, Danforth and Marquis, and Messrs. Ritty, Rothen, Yahnke and Lacker, Germans, *Ohio;* Messrs. Merrill, Knowlton, Salmon, Ross and Paramour, and Mr. Hauck, German, *Indiana;* Messrs. Keith and Dysart, *Kentucky;* Mr. Stebbins, *Tennessee;* and Mr. Fuller, *Missouri.*

It was ascertained in the course of the meeting that without seeking such a result, the Providence of God had raised up these laborers in connection with *ten different evangelical denominations*, as follows: Congregationalist, Presbyterian, (O. & N. S.) Reformed Dutch, German Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, and Cumberland Presbyterian. It was a beautiful exhibition of christian unity; for, with the most free and unrestrained conversation on a vast variety of themes relating to doctrine and duty, not a word was spoken in our protracted sessions to conflict with the peculiar views of any one; and an attentive observer could not have discovered that we were not a brotherhood of the same name. The same spirit that has always breathed in our meetings in New-York was cherished and manifested here. "Christ and him crucified" was our theme, and the salvation of souls our object. There was no place in such a gathering for those dissensions that distract the churches and disgrace the christian name. Who that loves Zion will not pray that they may find no place in any of the assemblies of protestant christians and ministers, at least in our land? Would that a truce could be proclaimed universally between all evangelical sects, and the weapons of spiritual warfare all be employed in slaying the foes—not wounding the friends of the cross, *until the world is converted.*

After singing and prayer at the opening session, a statement was made respecting the usefulness of similar meetings at the East, and the manner of conducting them explained.

Rev. Mr. Vail expressed his views of the importance of the meeting in its relations to the great work before the Society, and as a means of securing higher consecration to the work and increased qualifications for it. A long course of training is thought indispensable for the ministry; and preparation for

labors for the good of souls on the part of the colporteur is essential to his success. He presented in a striking light the responsibilities resting on those engaged in these labors, and the advantages that might accrue from the meeting to those present, if they engaged in its exercises in prayerful dependance on God, without whose blessing we met in vain, and who delighted to impart spiritual gifts. There should be a full and free communication of facts, views and feelings, as among a company of disciples seeking only the Master's glory.

Mr. Cook gave an *historical sketch* of Colportage, beginning with Philip and the disciples who were scattered abroad by the persecution at Jerusalem in the days of Stephen; embracing its relations to the Great Reformation under Luther; its application to Roman Catholic Europe in modern times—explaining the difference between European and American Colportage, in the character of the men and the comparative encouragements and difficulties of the two systems; the place occupied by Bible-readers in Ireland, and the hints to be gathered from their labors when brought in contact with families who cannot read, &c.

Mr. C. also communicated facts respecting the *Rongian* Reformation now progressing in Germany, and proceeded to give a sketch of the rise and progress of the Society in its various departments, and especially the volume circulation, which began to be more efficiently extended to the destitute in the form of Colportage in 1841. He alluded to the colporteur movement among the Germans, commencing at Cincinnati three years ago, extended to the Germans in Pennsylvania the subsequent winter, and prosecuted now on a wide scale; the attention given to French, Irish and Welch immigrants, to sailors, the colored population and other neglected classes, and gave a description of the men providentially raised up and laboring among them.

Individual History and Religious Experience.

The next exercise, and one of the most interesting and profitable during the meeting, was the narration of the individual religious experience and history of each laborer. The design of this exercise was to promote mutual acquaintance and fellowship; to ascertain on what foundation our hopes were rest-

ing, and to seek and impart such advice as might be needed. Nearly a day and a half was occupied in eliciting the facts, and suggesting counsel and encouragement. The result was most gratifying. Mutual confidence and attachment was strengthened, and we were led to adore the grace that in such various and often mysterious ways had led us all, as we humbly hoped, to a vital interest in atoning blood. Some had enjoyed the instruction of pious New England parents, and had been led in early life to the Savior. Others had grown up without religious restraint, and had been arrested in the midst of folly and sin, and thus brought to the Savior's feet. Others again had been reared under the cold and formal gospel institutions of protestant Europe, admitted to the church without any saving knowledge of Christ, and had first learned the elements of a spiritual faith at a Bethel prayer-meeting or from christian lips this side of the Atlantic; and others still had been the bigoted adherents of Rome for years, and at last, through persecution and trial, had made their escape from the Man of Sin and fled to Christ.

REPORTS OF COLPORTEURS.

At the meeting of colporteurs in Cincinnati, about two days were spent in listening to the reports of the several laborers of the service performed on their respective fields. The design of these reports was not merely to elicit the facts respecting the spiritual condition of the population; the amount of labor performed, and the apparent results; but to draw out minutely *the manner of performing the work*, that each might profit by the experience of the other, and that any mistakes might be pointed out and corrected. The inquiries were thorough and the replies generally satisfactory. In the case of those who had been reared in the Romish church, or other formal churches, a series of questions was proposed intended to test their knowledge of evangelical truth, and how far their views were discriminating and accurate on the vital doctrines of the cross. It was cheering to find their clear and distinct apprehension of Bible truth, and their especial adherence to and love for the great doctrine of the Reformation—*Justification by faith.* It was worthy of remark that *all* the colporteurs, who had been engaged for a few months, had the

cheering evidence afforded, by the conversion of souls, that their labors were not in vain, notwithstanding the prevalent dearth of the Spirit's influences in the land. Some who had "gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed," came again rejoicing, bringing *many* "sheaves" with them.

It will, of course, be impracticable to report all the facts of interest stated in these two days of our meeting. Perhaps a brief statement of the facts reported by one Colporteur in each of the States represented, will furnish an illustration sufficiently extended of the whole.

Report of a Kentucky Colporteur.

Mr. Jason Keith has spent about eighteen months in Northern Kentucky, and has visited about 3,000 families, among whom he sold volumes to the value of about $1,000 and granted publications to the amount of more than $200. A portion of his field he found very destitute of the means of grace. In one county not more than one in six or eight attended evangelical preaching. In the more destitute counties, not more than half the people possessed any religious books, and Sabbath-schools were infrequent. He had found one family in four, in a neighborhood of 60 families, without the Bible, soon after an effort for the circulation of the Scriptures. In three of the counties there are but three educated ministers, of all denominations. Many preachers are poorly qualified: one of them stated that he had never read any other book than the Bible. Members of the church are little accustomed to active personal co-operation, and he has been compelled to do his work alone. But the labor has not been without its reward. Repeated cases of conversion have occurred on his field, in connection with the reading of the books, some of which he related. Several drunkards have been reformed by his labors, and at least one distillery stopped in its work of death. While stating the relations of the work to temperance, Mr. K. related the following anecdote of

The Colporteur and the whiskey-barrel.

Mr. K. heard of a magistrate who was notorious for his drunkenness, but who exerted a great influence on the community around him. He made it convenient to stop at the magistrate's house at night-fall, and spent the night with

him. He found him too much intoxicated to make any advances; but in the morning the Colporteur was careful to be up before the magistrate had taken his dram, and remonstrated with him against persisting in a practice that was destroying him. The Colporteur, to enforce his appeal, told him that, poor as he was, he would pay for the barrel of whiskey which had recently been brought home if he would roll it into the street and destroy it. Convinced at last of his wrong-doing, he determined to destroy his destroyer, on his own account, and ordered one of his men to roll the barrel into the yard and to the brow of a hill near by. "Now," said he to the man, "give it a hard push and let it go!" The wife and children stood in the door, witnesses of the scene, and the little ones, who knew the cause of their father's ruin and saw the change, clapped their hands. Several stood around, manifesting their gratification. "Jim, go get an axe quick," said the magistrate, and following the barrel down the hill, with a stroke of the axe the head of the barrel was dashed in pieces. The magistrate thanked the Colporteur for helping him to triumph over his worst enemy.

Report of a Colporteur in Indiana.

Mr. E. H. Merrill has labored three years, and visited parts of 13 counties in Indiana. He has circulated publications to the value of about $2,000, including grants to the amount of nearly $500 among the poor. The destitution of religious privileges was very great on his field. Many professors of religion were destitute of the Bible, and an average of about one fifth of the people he had visited were without the sacred volume. Nearly one-half were destitute of all religious books. Not more than one-half of the people enjoyed evangelical instruction from the pulpit. He had visited many families who had not heard a sermon of any kind for years.

He had abundant evidence that the books of the Society were read. Even in families where no one could read, he had left books which their neighbors had read to them. In one such case, the woman, who was taken sick, had a nurse come into the family who could read, and the reading of the book had been the means of her conversion, and of inducing the family to attend church and send their children to school. An

old man of 60 years, who earned 75 cts. a day by hard labor, purchased the Family Library, which he read through in three months, and was reading it a second time when the Colporteur saw him last. He converses with nearly every family on personal religion, and prays with most, which tends to secure a reading of the books.

Evangelical ministers of all denominations have received him cordially and co-operated with him. All his influence had been given to aid the ministry and to encourage the people in giving their preachers an adequate support. He had given money from his own pocket to help poor missionaries on his field. He had found several uneducated preachers without the Bible. One had a Testament, which he had frequently held up before his congregation as his only book, and boasting that he was "the *one book* man." The children of another preacher of this class could not read!

A Tennessee Colporteur's Report.

Mr. S. W. Stebbins has visited portions of twelve counties in western Tennessee during sixteen months' labors; and sold about 7,500 volumes and 80,000 Tracts, and granted about 800 volumes and 70,000 Tracts to the destitute. The whole number of families visited is about 2,500, with most of whom he has conversed and prayed. In some counties about one third of the people were destitute of all religious books except the Bible, and many had not the best of books. In one district, of 230 families visited 30 were destitute of the Bible, and one or both of the heads of several of these families were professors of religion.

He has visited the churches of different denominations, and having obtained the co-operation of the ministers, publicly presented the claims of the Society. Some days were then spent in visiting from house to house, with the aid of the minister or some member of the church, conversing with every individual so far as possible on personal religion, praying with families, and placing in every house such volumes and Tracts as were suited to their wants.

He has received the most cordial co-operation from ministers and christians of every evangelical denomination, and the hospitality of all classes of the population. *In travelling about*

7,000 *miles, he has paid for board, lodging and horse-keeping, but* $2 62!

Besides the many intelligent and devoted ministers on his field, there was to be found a class who were quite illiterate. One of this class thinks seriously of writing a commentary on the Bible, but has scarcely a book in his house except a hymn-book, and his family had little desire to increase the stock. Another was complaining of the great *alterations made in the Bible.* Referring his hearers, for illustration, to Matt. 28 : 29, he said, in his old Bible the verse read, "Lo, I am with you *al-way*," meaning that he would be with all his disciples in *one* way, i. e. with one denomination, which was his own! "But now," said he, "they have added an *s* to the word, making the Savior say that he would be with them in *all sorts of ways*, and in all denominations, whether christians or sinners!"

A Converted German Romanist's Narrative and Report.

Leger Ritty was educated in the Roman catholic faith, and continued a firm adherent of that church for thirty-three years. At a suitable age (in 1819) he entered the army, where he continued eight years. There he became intemperate, like many around him. In 1828 he emigrated to America, landing at Philadelphia, and pursuing a wicked life there for a year. He knew that his course led to ruin; but as he had been taught to believe that he could make up for delinquences in this life in purgatory, its refining fires were his ground of hope and his only consolation in reference to the future. Still his conscience was unquiet. He wished to reform, but knew not the way. He had never read the Bible. He removed to P—— with the hope of recovering his health, and lay sick there for a long period. His physician gave up his case as hopeless, and the "sacrament" of extreme unction was administered. During his illness he reflected on his hopeless condition, and became anxious for his soul's salvation. So wedded was he still to the superstitions of Rome, that he thought the reading of a great many masses might deliver him from his sins and afford relief to his troubled soul. He sent thirty francs at one time and fourteen at another to Germany, to procure masses read, the priest in P—— asking fifty cents for each mass, while each franc would procure one

in Germany. He also prayed to the saints, and repeated again and again the forms of prayer prescribed. But all would not avail. His distress of mind increased.

As he recovered, he resolved to get a Bible, and see if he could not find comfort there. He went to the priest and told him he must have a Bible. The priest refused. R—— offered him $10 for a copy, but he still refused; poor as he was, he offered him $20, but the priest told him he could not have one on any terms—"the Bible was *not made for the common people.*" R—— told him that he must have a Bible, and if he would not let him have a copy, he would get a Lutheran Bible. The priest appeared angry, opened the door and drove him out of the house; telling him to go to church and hear the Gospel from his lips.

R—— met a woman with a Bible in her hand one morning, which he purchased after Luther's name had been torn from the title page. From this he obtained much light. He read it day and night. He sought the company of German protestants, thinking that all protestants who had the Bible were good people. But he found many as ignorant and christless as were his old associates.

In 1833 he removed to Cincinnati, hoping to find some one to instruct him, but soon encountered some of his old Roman catholic associates, who offered him the whiskey-bottle. He refused to drink and they called him a Methodist. He knew nothing before of this people, whom he afterwards sought out. He discovered from his Bible that there was no warrant for Romish superstition, and he went from house to house among the catholics, telling them that they had all been wrong, and that they must change their manner of living or be lost. About five weeks after he came to C., after thus speaking with a family, and when leaving the house, the burden of his sins rolled away, and like the man that had been healed by Peter and John, he could leap for joy and praise God for his goodness. His only christian instructor had been the Bible. He went on from house to house telling the people what had been done for him, in the pardon of his sins. The avails of his daily labor, beyond the expenses of his family, he expended for German Testaments, which he carried to Roman catholic families, and exhorted them to

read, and seek the salvation of their souls. Nor were these labors in vain.

When one of the Secretaries of the Tract Society visited the West three years since, he received a call to labor as a colporteur among the Germans. The will of God was plain, and he had had much spiritual enjoyment in his work. The Spirit of God had richly blessed his labors among his poor fellow-countrymen.

Mr. R—— has devoted three years of untiring effort principally to the Roman catholic Germans of Ohio. The narrative of his labors is deeply interesting and instructive. Aside from the statement made in our meeting, we spent four hours with him in eliciting facts and views respecting the progress of the work of God among the German Romanists, and with the hope of gaining some light in regard to the best plan of effort for the salvation of that neglected population. We cannot hope to communicate the impressions made on our minds by this interview, either of the greatness of the work already accomplished, or of the glorious prospect before us, if a spirit of sympathy and earnest prayer can be awakened in behalf of the Roman catholics of this country, especially the Germans.

Mr. R—— is about 45 years old, with a vigorous frame, a strongly marked and expressive countenance, sonorous voice, pleasing manners, and strong faith in God. He is very familiar with the German Scriptures. His views of the plan of salvation are clear and discriminating. He regards himself as called of God to convey the gospel message to the most neglected and degraded; and he cherishes a feeling of deep compassion for the adherents of the Romish church, the persecution he has suffered only serving to deepen his sympathy and quicken his faith and prayer.

He commenced his work in 1842 for three months, with the determination to leave if souls were not converted by his labors, and refusing to receive compensation if he had not manifest tokens that God had called him to this labor. Almost the first catholic whom he visited, after a protracted conversation of eight hours, was converted. A catholic girl, who was somewhat intelligent and in good circumstances residing at G——, purchased volumes to the amount of $1 50. They were the means of her conversion. She joined the pro-

testant church; stripped the ornaments from her person and put them in the missionary box; is a regular contributer to the Tract Society; gives away all she can get; and goes to the catholics around her with Bibles and books, thus becoming a colporteur herself. The priest tried to get her back; "but," said R——, "the Spirit of God is too strong for the priests, and she holds on her way."

Frequently his most bitter persecutors have been among the first converts. He offers special prayer for those who treat him ill. He prayed three months for such a family, who at first thrust him from their door with fire-shovel and broom. One of the most furious, who stood over him while praying, shaking her fist at him, was soon converted, and the other members of the family were all brought in subsequently. "They don't know any better," said R——, "and we must have patience with them and pray for them, and not get angry."

We can hardly refrain from writing out all our notes of the statements of Mr. R——, but they would fill the pages of this pamphlet of themselves, and other matters claim our attention.

The practical views of Mr. R—— as to the spirit and manner of laboring for Roman catholics are important, and a paragraph must be given to them. He uniformly *avoids controversy*, as not only unprofitable, but injurious. "If I begin to talk to a catholic about his errors," said R——, "he gets mad, and then it is like talking to a solid rock. When they bring up mass and purgatory, I turn it all aside, and press the conscience with gospel truth. If I hold up Jesus Christ and tell them to pray for the Spirit of the Lord, and show them from their own Testament that they must be born again, then they can be brought to Christ. If we can once get them to Christ, then all their errors about mass, and purgatory, and praying to the virgin, and all that, will drop off of course, and they can't stay in the catholic church. The trouble is in their *hearts*. When the Spirit of God puts their hearts right, all else will come right."

Speaking of the kind of books and Tracts that are most effective, he says, "all the books written *against* the catholic don't bring any fruit. When men write Tracts for catholics

they should write them with prayer; nothing but love can do them any good. Hard speeches spoil a great many catholic people. The priests make use of them to prejudice their minds against protestants. All the fiery speeches and fiery books should be kept away. They do hurt, and prevent the conversion of souls. Such books as Baxter's Saints' Rest, and such Tracts as the 'Way to be Saved' do the catholics the most good. If Tracts are of the right kind and written in a spirit of love, the German Catholics will take them as readily as the protestants. And even if the priest takes them away and burns them, they will do good, for the people *suck in* the truth, and when it gets in the heart, the priest can neither burn it nor freeze it out. Often when the priest tries to warn the people against our books, it is the means of advertising them, and the people will have them. Some of the priests are learning better, and are willing the people should read our books. The Spirit of God works with the books, and the priests cannot withstand it."

"I tell the people in every house," said R——, "for what Christ shed his blood, and how to exercise faith in him, and that there is no other way of salvation than through his atoning blood. I take each one by the hand and give him his part of divine truth. If I talk about the church, catholics won't hear me, but will make a noise with tin pans or something else; but when I talk about the love of Christ they will give me attention. Sometimes I speak so long to hard cases that I sink down faint, and I have to go home once in two months and get recruited. When I think that good christians are giving money and praying, I can't be idle, but work with all my might. Sometimes I wish the Society would tell me to stop, for the work is hard, and when I think of stopping of myself, my conscience strikes me like a hammer!" &c.

The *results* of these labors can, of course, only be fully known in eternity. There are sufficient fruits to encourage faith and hope. Mr. R—— speaks of *seventy-eight* persons, within his own knowledge, who have been hopefully converted, have left the church of Rome and connected themselves with protestant churches. We inquired of him respecting the number of nominal protestants who had been led to Christ by his labors. He had spoken incidentally of 19 in one place

and about 80 in another, &c. He replied that he had kept no memorandum of the whole number, for "*the Society would not believe what the Lord had wrought by his poor efforts and the books he had scattered.*" He has a firm conviction that the German Roman catholic community in this country is on the eve of a great reformation, when thousands will be brought to the Savior. A spirit of inquiry is aroused: the Bible is placed in thousands of their families, where three years ago not one in a thousand possessed it; our books and Tracts are extensively read; many converts have already come out of Rome, and demonstrated by a spiritual life the difference between a formal and a spiritual faith; in his expressive language, "the kingdom of God begins to go easy." "All we want," says R——, "is a spirit of wrestling prayer for the Roman Catholics, and to follow up this effort, and in a little while the power of the priesthood will be broken in this country, and a great revival will sweep them into the kingdom of Christ by thousands." Who will not devoutly and earnestly add, "Amen, and amen."

This is a meagre outline of the statement of Mr. R——. He speaks the English language imperfectly as yet, and no sketch can convey the impression made on our minds by the striking and characteristic narrative of this first German colporteur. Some facts respecting his three years abundant and successful labors may be appended. A palpable evidence of his useful efforts was before us, in the person of Mr. H——, an interesting and valuable colporteur, who was led to the Savior by Mr. R.'s instrumentality, and whose religious experience is scarcely less full of incident than that of Mr. R.; but this, with the details of all the others, valuable as they are in many respects, must be omitted.

A little incident of the meeting shows that the circles of influence, from the Colporteur enterprise, are widening and rapidly extending. An intelligent and pious German from Louisville, who had been recently converted in connection with the labors of Mr. H. (alluded to above,) came into the Convention. He was the (spiritual) *son* of Mr. H. and the *grandson* of Mr. R. Here were three generations, within three years, the fruits of German colportage.

Another incident may be worth relating. The colporteurs

were especially punctual in their attendance on the meetings of the Convention. But one morning we noticed the absence of R—— and H—— for nearly two hours. We learned on inquiring, that on their way to the meeting they stepped into the house of a German catholic, and while trying to persuade the inmates to repent and believe, the priest entered and assailed them. They were detained there two hours in attempting to exhibit and defend the Bible view of salvation to this company. What better excuse was needed?

Advice to Colporteurs.

Two days or more having been spent in eliciting facts like the above from the several laborers, the way was prepared to communicate advice and instruction relative to the plans and principles of the Society, and the duties devolving upon those engaged in its service. A mere outline of the topics will show something of the range covered in the last two or three days of the meeting.

Circulation of books—Reports.

Mr. S. Wood gave the results of some ten years' experience in the volume circulation, with practical hints as to the best method of effecting the sale of publications. The first point was to secure the co-operation of ministers of the various denominations, which might always be gained by acquainting them with the facts of the Society's work, and the benevolent objects at which it aims. To do this our own hearts must be full of the subject. Where there are churches of different denominations, after they have been addressed separately, it is well for the cause, and for the promotion of christian union, to have a united meeting, where the facts may come out more fully. It is important to secure the aid, so far as practicable, of some intelligent laymen, who may accompany the colporteur in his visits from house to house. The effort should be made to introduce a library into such families as are able to purchase it: the example may be beneficial to other families. Each call, in circulating the books, should be a christian visit. The children should be noticed, for this is often the most direct way of gaining the confidence of the parents. Do not rely on the general statement that the books are excellent. You should be so familiar with each book, that you can state

the subject of it, with such incidents in the history of the author, or of the usefulness of the book, that the people may be led to desire it. The reports of the Society are full of such facts, and they should be at the command of the colporteur. Mild, faithful, Christ-like conversation, with the manifest desire of benefiting the souls of the people, is the best recommendation of the work, and the surest method of securing a large circulation. It at once dispels all secular associations with the work. Each visit should be made as if it might be the last, and with a clear view of our obligations to Christ.

Mr. W. took up volume after volume and illustrated the manner of communicating facts to families in connection with each.

He also explained minutely the manner of keeping accounts, and making a report of labors to the western agency and to the committee. A careful comparison of each box should be made with the bill, and any error reported in the next letter. A memorandum should be kept of every item of receipts, expenditures and grants. In the book of grants, the circumstances of each grant should be noted, and the book brought in for examination at the time the accounts are adjusted. All business matters should be attended to and reported with minute accuracy. They were personally responsible for every book charged to them, and must account for everything.

Interior view of the Tract House.

Mr. Cook proposed a temporary visit to the Tract Society's House, New-York, with the view of making the colporteur familiar with the men and the work. He described the building, costing with the lot $52,000, erected without the appropriation of a dollar contributed for the Society's general objects, and now free from incumbrance; introduced the brethren to his associate Secretaries, the Assistant Treasurer, Depositary and Assistants; and to the printing-office and bindery, and the daily prayer-meeting in the latter; and explained the process of preparing books for circulation, and the principles on which the prices are affixed. The President of the Society and each member of the Executive Committee was brought to the acquaintance of the brethren, and the fact stated that, besides wholly gratuitous service for twenty

years by most of the members, they had contributed more than $30,000 to the funds of the Society.

The laborers in the Tract House give their undivided attention to their work. The division of labor is so complete that each individual must be responsible for his department. The Secretaries have almost no intercourse during the hours of the day, each being engrossed with his own work; their consultations are usually at night, and often till a late hour.

The manner of transacting the business of each of the Committees comprising the Executive Committee, viz. the Publishing, Finance, and Distributing Committees, was explained,with the principles on which each proceeds.

The principle of *catholic christian union*, in its practical workings in this Society, was commented on. This was not a society composed of different denominations ecclesiastically, but *members* of thirteen different evangelical denominations meet on this common platform to propagate the great cardinal doctrines of salvation, all retaining and exercising freely the right to advance their own peculiarities in their own way, but not in this channel. With scarcely an exception, the harmony had been complete. We knew nothing of jarring counsels. We carried nothing by majorities. If we were not unanimous, we did not move. There was no speech-making or debating in the Committee. The numbers were too small for that, and the nature of the work was such, with no other aim than to win souls to Christ, as to forbid those contests which good men in other relations might sometimes wage against good men.

The principle on which the Society was based appeared increasingly important, and he believed it was taking a deeper hold on the hearts of christians. The co-operation of the different denominations had been more and more cordial every year, so that many of the most ardent friends of the Society, of several branches of the church, were those who a few years since had rendered but little aid. The great body of ministers and christians were advancing in catholic feeling and co-operation, notwithstanding the zeal of some individuals for sectarianism. As revivals were multiplied, and the real condition of the country became known and the dangers of Romanism and other errors were manifest, this feeling will increase, and

good men of every name will feel constrained to combine their energies for the diffusion of truth.

The catholic character and relations of the Society rendered it necessary that all its laborers should cultivate a purely catholic spirit. It is natural and right that each christian should love and prefer the order of his own church; but this need not prevent his seeing and rejoicing in the image of Christ wherever he finds it. It was an attainment which each should strive to make, to throw aside prejudice, and in intercourse with those who love the Savior, meet those of other denominations with the same cordiality and affection as our own.

Another great principle incorporated into the Society relates to *the employment of the talent and piety of the members of the churches in co-operation with the ministry for the evangelization of the world.* The problem we are working out in this system of Colportage, is one of untold importance. The principle once settled, that there is a wide sphere for the employment of the talent and influence of every true follower of Christ, so as to strengthen the hands of the ministry wherever it exists, and to prepare the way for the introduction of permanent gospel institutions in the waste places of the land and the world, and new life at once pervades the church of God. We are fast settling that principle, and here and there, all over the land, there are christians who are feeling its power.

The chief danger apprehended by any in the application of this principle to Colportage, is in the direction of collision with the ministry. You ought to be aware of such an apprehension, and be scrupulously careful that it be in no degree realized. Scarcely a single complaint on this score has ever reached the ears of the Committee, in an experience of 15 years, with hundreds of laborers, and we apprehend little difficulty from this source. But each laborer should understand distinctly that the Committee expect of him implicit respect for the authority and opinions of the ministry of reconciliation, and an invariable effort to strengthen the hands of all who preach Christ and him crucified. None of the prerogatives of the ministry should be invaded, and none of the peculiar duties of the ministry attempted. There is ample scope for the employment of your talent and piety in more humble and unobtrusive labors among the poor and perishing. Keep in that

track, and furnish an illustration, Harlan Page-like, of what plain, pious men may accomplish for the good of souls, and you put an argument in the mouth of every minister for the developement of the dormant energies of the members of his church; and you will send out an influence which will reach around the world in the promotion of active piety.

Local Colporteurs.

Mr. C—— suggested that after the visitation of a destitute neighborhood, the colporteur should endeavor to interest some christian near it in systematic efforts for the spiritual good of the people. Let him explain the condition of the families and awaken sympathy in their behalf; and, if possible, secure a pledge that the district shall be visited once a month or once in three months in a similar manner. If necessary, supply the local colporteur, as he might be called, with Tracts for distribution, or with a few books to be loaned from family to family. Thus the power of Colportage would be brought to bear continually on the destitute, and the system perfected. So far as the plan could be carried out, the people would all enjoy some religious privileges, and the sanctuaries would be more frequented.

Tract Visitation.

As an illustration of the feasibility and value of the plan suggested above, and for the sake of making the colporteurs familiar with the different branches of the Society's work, Mr. C—— explained the operation of the system of Tract visitation, as prosecuted in New-York City and elsewhere, employing, probably, some 10,000 christians in monthly efforts to do good. Not far from 2,500 souls had been hopefully converted in New-York alone, in the last ten years, by the Divine blessing on this humble instrumentality. He saw not why the plan of local colportage might not extend the blessings of this enterprise over the land.

Foreign operations.

Mr. Cook and Mr. Vail made full statements respecting the operations of the Society on the Continent of Europe and in Pagan lands. In every quarter of the globe where a Providential opening existed, something had been done to diffuse the

Gospel on the printed page. More than 2,000 publications had been prepared, in 100 different languages and dialects, and nearly $300,000 had been appropriated by the Society to publish the Gospel abroad. The principles on which foreign grants were made and co-operation rendered to the various Missionary Boards, were stated, and the leading facts in the foreign work communicated. From several missionary stations appeals had recently been received for aid to carry forward Colporteur labors among the heathen. The missionaries saw its practical workings in this country, and perceived its adaptation to their wants. They could employ native talent in their churches to reach millions that they could not personally influence.

Influence of Fictitious Reading.

The influence of the immoral and fictitious press, and the best way of supplanting it, came up for discussion. One of the Secretaries stated that the topic was receiving increased attention, and demanded much more thought than had ever been given to it. He regarded it as one of the prime causes of the general worldliness in the church, and indifference to religion among the people. The land was deluged with trash, with scarcely a warning voice raised in any quarter.

The objections to reading works of this sort were, 1. The absolute waste of time—no one ever reading them for profit, but for amusement simply. 2. It gives a distaste for solid reading. This is true of what is called religious fiction as well as of other works. 3. The habit of reading for amusement is carried into the sanctuary and the reading of the Bible, so as to dissever the connection between what we read or hear and our duty and destiny. 4. The principles inculcated in this whole range of reading are unsound and dangerous. They are never drawn from the Bible. They present a perverted view of human nature, and never exhibit evangelical sentiments as they are. 5. It undermines the Gospel and the power of the pulpit. The devil has the eyes of the people through the week, and the preacher has their ears for two hours on the Sabbath. It is almost impossible to make any religious impression on a mind thus trained, and if any is made it is soon and easily effaced by the fascinating volume.

This evil should be exposed in all suitable ways, public and

private. Better books should be made as common, as accessible, and as cheap as this trash, and people should be taught their value. Ministers are beginning to speak out, and the best men in the book-trade are beginning to move for a reform in this respect, and demanding of publishers that they shall not issue or send them works which corrupt the morals and vitiate the taste of the community. The Colporteur should exert his influence discreetly to discountenance the circulation and reading of such publications.

Circulation of the Scriptures.

The importance of an adequate supply of Bibles and Testaments appeared from the statements of most of the Colporteurs. Some difficulty had been experienced in procuring them from local Bible Auxiliaries, as they frequently had no supply, or neglected to furnish the Colporteurs. Mr. Rothen stated that he had been entreated by Roman Catholics with tears to give them Bibles, but he could not obtain them. Similar statements were made by others. The Secretary stated that the *general* distribution of the Scriptures must be performed by the Bible Society and its auxiliaries. All that the Committee could undertake or authorize the Colporteurs to do was to supply the families who were absolutely destitute of the word of God. And for this purpose it was the wish of the Parent Bible Society that its auxiliaries would make provision, and where it was neglected, or there were no auxiliaries, he believed the Society at New-York would cheerfully make a grant. It was clear that we could not pass by families without the Word of God, and leave them to the uncertainty of some future supply. In some way each Colporteur must be supplied to a limited extent.

Grants of publications to Missionaries and poor Ministers.

Several of the Colporteurs made statements respecting the want of books among poor ministers, and especially those of limited education, of whom there are multitudes, of various denominations, striving to do good, but under great disadvantages. Many cases were stated of ministers who had not a book of any kind except the Bible, and some had not an entire copy of the Scriptures. It seems difficult to conceive circum-

stances where liberal grants of books could be more judiciously made. The rule which applies to the mass of the people, and by which the Colporteurs are governed, might be modified so as to allow a more free distribution to ministers of the class here alluded to.

Devotional Exercises.

The meeting was closed on the eighth day, by spending the latter half of the day in devotional exercises. Rev. Mr. Bliss made some remarks on the vastness of the work laid to our hand; the importance of grasping it in its wide relations, and the necessity of higher attainments in holiness if we would bring the full power of the enterprise to bear on our country and the world. We must strive to become Christ-like; gain a nearness to God such as we have never attained, and then go to every professed christian with a faithful message about experimental religion. We may be on the eve of a great work of God in the world, and we want to be ready for it and do much to promote it.

Rev. Mr. Vail followed with remarks in the same strain, and held up the examples of Payson, Brainerd, and other godly men.

Mr. Cook urged the value of the soul and the price paid for its redemption as a motive to effort, and to the cultivation of every talent that would facilitate our influence over men. Years are spent in learning some trade; and shall we not seek to gain skill in dealing with immortal souls? It is the noblest of all trades, and deserves the most study. It was a great art to learn how to adapt our words and publications to the various classes we meet. It needed a profound knowledge of human nature. Above all, we should labor with single reference to the honor of the Redeemer. It is a small matter to labor for a Committee or a Society: but it is a great matter to labor for Christ. We should cherish this feeling of immediate responsibility. Then, too, Christ should be the burden of our message. "What think ye of Christ?" should be our question; and the exhibition of Christ's dying love our constant theme. Nothing affected the human heart like it. If we are singular men, let us be singular in this, that, avoiding all needless controversy and strife, like Paul, we will "know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

But it is impossible fully to describe a devotional meeting

after eight days of such conference as we had enjoyed. We thought we saw in that season the germ of many a revival of religion, through the Spirit's blessing on sanctified effort. Prayer and singing were interspersed. The meeting was closed with the hymn, "Blest be the tie that binds," &c. and the benediction.

If we mistake not, every one of the Colporteurs we met is a singer, a fact which has more connection with their usefulness than would appear at first thought.

It is also worthy of remark, that the *average age* of the 22 persons present at this meeting is *thirty-nine years*, and at the meeting at Pittsburgh the average age was thirty-five years—showing that it is not inexperienced young men who are employed in this service.

Public Meetings in Cincinnati.

During our visit, besides the presentation of the Society's work in several pulpits, repeated public meetings were held. The anniversary of the Ladies' Colporteur Association was held in Christ Church, (Episcopal,) on the evening of July 8. Their receipts for the year had been $400. Rev. Seth Bliss opened the meeting with prayer. Mr. Cook gave a sketch of the rise and progress of German Colportage, which had its beginnings in this country in connection with the formation of this Association three years since. Mr. Ermentrout stated the condition of Colporteur labors in Eastern Pennsylvania among the Germans. Messrs. Yahnke, Stebbins and Ritty communicated interesting intelligence respecting their labors among the destitute.

A general meeting was held in the 2d Presbyterian Church, on Sabbath evening the 13th, which was fully attended. Mr. Robert Boal communicated facts respecting the City Tract effort, and the meeting was addressed by Mr. Cook; Mr. Stebbins, Colporteur from Tennessee; and by Rev. Drs. Cleveland and Beecher. It was cheering to hear the voice of the venerable Dr. B. urging on this blessed work with all the vigor of youth.

A meeting of the Tract visiters was held on Monday evening, and addressed by the Secretary and General Agent. It is believed that a deeper interest was awakened in our work, in the hearts of intelligent christians in Cincinnati, than ever be-

fore existed. The whole aspect of things, so far as relates to christian sympathy and co-operation, and the condition of the work itself, is most cheering on the Western field. Let us "thank God and take courage."

Meeting of Colporteurs at Pittsburgh.

From Cincinnati, one of the Secretaries, Mr. Bliss, went down the Ohio River to St. Louis, and thence, via Chicago, to Boston. Mr. Cook proceeded to Pittsburgh to meet a previous appointment with the Colporteurs on the adjacent field. On the 19th of July there were present the Secretary; Rev. S. T. Wells, General Agent; Rev. L. Conrad, (German,) Messrs. Clarke, Knight, Jacobs, Boyd, Edgar, Smith, and Speer, of *W. Pennsylvania;* Cross, of *W. Virginia;* and Sala, of *Ohio*, Colporteurs. The meeting continued four days, and was of a deeply interesting and profitable character. No laborers in the Society's service have been more blessed than some of those present at this meeting, and we regret the necessity of omitting or deferring statements of facts that would cheer the heart of every friend of Zion.

The Secretary was called upon to present the bearings of Colportage in four of the Presbyterian Churches, ministered to by Rev. Drs. Herron, Riddle and Swift, and Rev. Mr. Dunlap; and in the Associate Reformed Church, Rev. Dr. Pressley; the Seceder Church, Rev. Mr. Rogers, and the Episcopal Church, Rev. Mr. Preston. A crowded public meeting was held in the Liberty-street Methodist Church on Sabbath evening, (27th July.) Hundreds were unable to find seats. Rev. Dr. Riddle and Rev. Mr. Holmes conducted the devotional exercises, and Rev. Mr. Black, of the Covenanter Church, Rev. Mr. Passavant, of the Lutheran Church, and the Secretary, addressed the meeting.

A meeting of ladies was held on Monday P. M. in Rev. Dr. Herron's Church, and addressed by Rev. Mr. Wells, by the Secretary, and by Rev. Dr. Greene, Professor in the Western Theological Seminary. We wish Dr. G.'s noble and far-reaching views of this cause could be spread before the public.

There is probably no portion of the country where the

prospects of this cause are more cheering at the present time than in Western Pennsylvania. The Society's Agent is very acceptable, and has the confidence and co-operation of the ministers and people. The palpable benefits of colportage are seen by intelligent men. The immense German and Welch population, and the increasing numbers and influence of Romanists among them, are awakening the christian community to effort and prayer. With prudent and efficient effort in the direction of the neglected population, the Society may look for steady and liberal co-operation from the various branches of the church in Western Pennsylvania.

REVIEW OF MEETINGS AT THE WEST.

In reviewing the incidents of the interesting excursion thus imperfectly sketched, these thoughts are suggested.

1. The vastness and prospective greatness of the country, in territory, resources, population—every thing. The wildest dreams of the imagination will be outstripped by the sober reality. The population of the world might be emptied into the basin lying between the Alleghany and Rocky Mountains, and there would be elbow-room and provender.

2. The christian public are not aware of the degree or extent of the moral desolations of the country; or efforts, prayers and money would flow in a wave of salvation over the land.

3. The present generation will probably determine the character and destiny of this country for generations to come. The foundations of society are now to be laid on the sand or on the rock.

4. Christian churches, with an efficient ministry, should every where be established and sustained, as an indispensable means of evangelizing the country: but,

5. There are scattered millions who do not and for years will not enjoy sanctuary privileges, and who must be sought out by some such agency as that employed by this Society.

6. This work cannot be done with equal facility by denominational organizations. The people are of every faith and of no faith. A dozen or twenty different sects will have their representatives in a little community, and the instruction from the press for this population must be of a spiritual, catholic character to reach the masses.

7. There is an immense population under the influence of an uninstructed and secular ministry, to whom, with their ministers, Colportage has an important relation. The lack of instructive preaching may be measurably supplied by the writings of spiritual and intelligent ministers of other ages; and materials may be supplied to the ministers themselves for imparting more rich and full instruction, in the practical works of Baxter, Flavel, Owen and Edwards.

8. God's hand is in the Colporteur work, giving us a band of whom we may say, "these are our jewels," and blessing their labors to a degree that our highest hopes had not anticipated.

9. Many of the colporteurs, by the constant employment of their talents and the incessant exercise of their benevolent feeling, nearly double their intellectual and moral power each year of their labors. There are few better schools for training a man for usefulness; and few in which greater advances are made.

10. The colporteurs love and prize the ministry, and do every thing in their power to promote its influence. The ministers value the colporteurs as efficient auxiliaries to their work, and are asking for their aid in every part of the country. We have not met a minister in the West who is not a friend to colportage.

11. The work should be gradually extended as fast as men and means are furnished. We are reaching but a small part of the country, comparatively, and the same necessity that has led to the sending forth of a hundred men, demands another hundred. Every first-rate man, providentially raised up, can have a field and enough to do.

12. Especially should the Society's labors be extended among the Germans and other immigrants. The country is thronged with Germans. They are deplorably destitute of religious instruction. The adaptation of colportage to this population has been demonstrated. Why not attempt to reach *all* the immigrant population?

13. This enterprise is putting a new phase on Romanism. So far as relates to Roman catholics themselves, angry controversy is seen to harden and repel them; while it is clear that Christ-like compassion, effort and prayer may win them

by hundreds, and ultimately by thousands to Christ. Efforts for the promotion of mere protestant feeling are of little avail, so far as relates to the salvation of Romanists. An agency that *goes to them as sinners needing a Savior*, may accomplish what centuries of theological discussion cannot. Tenfold effort should be made and sustained for the Romanists. Will the churches encourage it?

14. The system of supervision adopted by the Society is thorough and wise. Each laborer receives careful and watchful attention, and his accounts are all adjusted with accuracy and promptness. A series of meetings at central points, like that reported above, say annually, may be productive of great good in every way.

15. The friends of the Society, the lovers of our country, the followers of Jesus, must increase and continue their contributions, or the work cannot go forward. Extended as the system has become, with all the former burdens of the Society in other departments, there must be liberal donations from individuals and churches all over the land. Could the reader of this paragraph, like the writer, listen to the story of fifty colporteurs detailing the circumstances of destitution of multitudes of the people—without Sabbaths or sanctuaries—without Bibles or books—without christian influence of any sort; and on the other hand, the joy with which many a desolate habitation is filled by the visit of mercy—the tear of contrition—the anxious inquiry—the new-born hope—the cheerful consecration—the useful plans—and then the school-house—the church—the preacher—the revival—thus for days dwelling in the interior of this work, it would not be a month before the Treasury would be relieved of every embarrassment and the broadest plans of the Society for the salvation of destitute millions of our own and other lands, might be carried forward to a speedy accomplishment. We look to God, who holds the hearts of all men in his hands, and wait for such a response as may fill the waste places of the land with joy and gladness.

MEETING OF COLPORTEURS IN NEW-YORK CITY.

The last, and in some respects the most interesting of the series of colporteur conferences, convened at the Tract House, New-York, on Tuesday, Sept. 16, and continued in session till the close of the morning of Friday. There were present Wm. A. Hallock, O. Eastman, and R. S. Cook, Secretaries; Rev. S. Guiteau, Secretary of the Baltimore Branch; Rev. Messrs. Ferguson, Holmes, Savage, Brown, Wells, Peabody, and Mr. M'Carter, General Agents; Rev. Alex. M'Glashan, Superintendent for Alabama; Rev. A. B. L. Myers, Volume Agent; Messrs. Bourne, Pearson, Tucker, Cobb, Eulner, Haynes, Hurley, Couillard, Bayliss, Horton, Gregg, Cook, Patterson, Osborne, Lesley, Long, Herrick, Mabee, and Smith, Colporteurs, and four gentlemen who proposed entering the service of the Society and attended the meeting for the sake of becoming more familiar with its operations. The President of the Society and Members of the Executive Committee were frequently present.

It was a meeting of deep and precious interest, attended by the manifest presence of the Spirit of God; a meeting never to be forgotten by those who were privileged to attend, when the hearts of all were drawn into nearer communion with their Savior, and when desires were awakened, and determinations fixed, for a more entire and cordial consecration to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Would that all the patrons and friends of the Society could have been present to have heard the interesting narratives; to have listened to the discussions; to have witnessed the harmony that prevailed, and to have caught a portion of the heavenly fire that seemed to glow and burn in the breasts of all. We can only give a sketch of the meeting. That which gave it its interest, the union of soul with soul, the thrill of sympathetic feeling that vibrated in every breast—the joy all felt as one after another told how God had blessed his labors—the moistened eye—the throbbing breast—the earnest and repeated prayers—these could be felt, but cannot be fully described.

The Rev. Mr. Hallock gave a brief history of the Society from its commencement in 1825 till the present time, and the way in which it had been led in the providence of God, the

doors that had been opened, and the fields now occupied. Rev. Mr. Cook spoke of the different meetings similar to this that he had attended during the summer, at Syracuse, Detroit, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh; of the happy effect they had upon the minds of all present; of the increased conviction he felt of the importance and magnitude of the work, and of the peculiar adaptation of the men engaged in it to carry it on successfully.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF INDIVIDUALS.

The first general exercise of the meeting was the personal narrative by each individual of his conversion and religious experience, and the means by which he became connected with this work. This exercise, though each was as brief as possible in his statements, occupied nearly a day and a half. But it was time well spent. It gave us an insight into one another's character and history. These narratives were almost as varied as the appearance of the individuals themselves. They showed that God is confined to no one means of reaching the hearts of men and renewing them by his grace; but in diverse manners and often by influences seemingly the most insufficient, were they led to see their lost condition, and brought to submit to the claims of Jesus. Some were hopefully converted during seasons of general religious interest. Others were arrested in their sinful courses when naught but the "still small voice" of God was heard that spoke peace to the soul. Some could date the precise time of their conversion, while others derived evidence of a saving interest in Christ more from the experience of their life than from a change in their feelings on any particular day or hour; and while some had entertained doubts of their piety because they could not speak with confidence of the time of their conversion, others had been led to distrust, from the fear that, having suddenly obtained hope, they might have been still resting on a false foundation. There was the proud free-thinker boasting of his intellect, whom not the threatenings of the Bible, the arguments of his minister, or the entreaties of pious friends could influence, but whose proud heart was forced to bow and break at the simple question of a beloved child, "Father, don't you know God?"—the Universalist, who,

while studying the Bible to furnish himself with arguments with which to convert his father, was brought "into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" the bitter scorner and opposer led to love that which he formerly despised; the Catholic, who had found that penance and confession were of no avail, and that Jesus only could pardon sin; the Infidel, who had been led to reflection by a call from a Tract visiter; the anxious sinner who, when sunk in hopeless despair, had found the Savior precious to his soul. There was the scholar of polished mind and profound acquirements; the man whose only school had been the world; the man who had been shipwrecked, and escaped from death at the cannon's mouth; the sailor who had sailed over every sea, and while on the other side of the globe, in view of death in a Chinese hospital, had praises to God put into his mouth; and the man who had followed the camp in this and other lands.

There, too, was the minister of Christ, who could look upon many hundred souls that had been given him as the fruit of his labors; more than one who could now see churches that had sprung from Sabbath-schools that they had planted; devoted laborers who had scattered far and wide the precious seed of the Gospel, who trust to the promise that they shall "return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." But although they differed in almost every particular, there was one point of resemblance too striking to escape observation, furnishing as it does renewed encouragement for pious parents to labor for the conversion of their children, and evidence that God is a covenant-keeping God. Of the 37 who related their religious experience, 29 stated that either one or both of their parents were pious, and that they received early religious education. It also appeared that there were present natives of five different countries, and that their average age was 35½ years.

This exercise was a most interesting and instructive one, calculated to strengthen the hopes and encourage the faith of the doubting, as they heard some of those devoted men, on whose christian character they relied with the most implicit confidence, expressing themselves with trembling in regard to their evidences of piety, and declaring that they must trust entirely to the grace of God as it is in Christ Jesus.

REPORTS OF LABORS.

At the conclusion of this exercise, the General Agent and Colporteurs gave a detailed account of their manner of labor, the state of their fields, and the success that they had met with. We give a brief statement of some of these reports.

Rev. H. B. Holmes, General Agent for Massachusetts, explained his method of raising funds. He goes to the pastors, feeling that they love the cause of Christ and benevolence, and sympathising in their toils and responsibilities. The great question in his mind continually is, "How can I best promote the cause of our Savior?" He desires to keep his heart constantly warm with love to Christ and to the souls of perishing men. He never appeals to selfish motives, but always to individual responsibility. He explains the object of the Society, its catholicity, and the character of the books, being the very cream of christian literature. When presenting the colporteur system, he shows the necessity of it, that the hand of God is evident in furnishing the men, the adaptation of the men to the work, and the evident blessing of the Holy Spirit attending it. The people will not hold back if they feel this. He spoke of his work as being a most delightful work, and said that he does not know what a cold reception is. One secret of his success may be found in the fact that he is careful regularly to observe the Sabbath morning concert for prayer.

Rev. Shepard Wells was for 2½ years a Volume Agent in Tennessee, Kentucky, Northern Alabama and Mississippi. His object was to give the work character, and to leave the impression that it was God's work bearing on the spiritual interests of the community. One great object was to bring distinctly before the people the character of the books, for which purpose he became himself intimately acquainted with them, so that he could apply the proper books to any given state of mind. He never asked a person to buy a book, but would seek so to interest them in the character of the publications that they would be desirous of purchasing. He would apply particular books to particular cases after conversing with individuals on the subject of their salvation. If persons were impenitent, he would endeavor so to interest them in the books they purchased that they would be anxious

to read them. In this way he circulated about 25,000 volumes in a small portion of his field, though the times were hard. He had much encouragement from the first. A pastor told him that five young men near the Hermitage were converted from reading Baxter's Call. A man, his father and two brothers, all infidels, were converted by reading Nelson's Cause and Cure of Infidelity. One copy of Nelson proved the means of the conversion of two prominent individuals, (one a member of Congress,) who commenced religious meetings that resulted in the conversion of over 200 souls; they attributed it all, under God, to *that book*. There were many other individual instances of hopeful conversion. The blessing of God rested richly on the work.

Mr. A. J. Bourne has been a Volume Agent and Colporteur in New England for nearly 3½ years. As he enters a place to prosecute his work, his first object is to secure the approbation and co-operation of all the evangelical ministers. This gained, he addresses their congregations, speaking of the origin, design and progress of the Society, the influence of the infidel and irreligious press, the evangelical character of the Society's publications, and the adaptation of the work to the state of the country, especially in meeting the different classes of errorists. He has secured co-operation from all evangelical denominations, has put in circulation about 25,000 volumes, and finds the interest in the Society constantly increasing on his field. He has found great delight in the work, has had his own soul richly watered, and, if any where, has seen the revival spirit in the voluntary laborers who have assisted him.

But we have not room for the statements made by the other General Agents, and by other Colporteurs laboring in New England and in New-York among the native and foreign population. Our hearts were cheered at the reports of their success, and we felt, as we saw their devotion to the work, their attachment to the ministry and their prudence and discretion, that the work was in safe hands, and with God's blessing would be crowned with rich success.

GENERAL SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION.

Our limited space also forbids us to give more than a mere outline of the topics that next came under discussion. They

were the principles on which the Society is based; its evangelical character, uniting christians of various names in efforts to diffuse the principles of our common faith, "Christ and him crucified;" the agencies employed, which are mainly the christian press and personal christian effort in diffusing the publications; the Domestic Department, in which was explained the organization of the Society, its Officers and Committees, the Society's House and the operations carried on in it, Printing, Binding, &c.; the Financial Department, agencies employed, the manner of raising funds, with statements in reference to the present and prospective financial state of the Institution; the extent of the Society's operations abroad, its relation to the Missionary Boards and to the Continent of Europe; the Department of Colportage, its history, the character and qualifications of colporteurs, and their practical duties; the relations of the Society to other benevolent Institutions engaged in the great work of evangelizing the world, &c.

It is believed that every one present had forcibly impressed upon his mind a more distinct idea than perhaps ever before of the magnitude and extended relations of the Society, and that each one retired from the meeting with a feeling of increased responsibility, and of his need of Almighty aid to sustain him in his arduous work.

DR. ALEXANDER'S REMARKS ON THE CORRUPT PRESS.

While the subject of the influence of the Press for good or evil was under discussion, the Rev. Dr. J. W. Alexander, who has given much attention to this point, made a few very eloquent and impressive remarks. He said it was not possible to exaggerate the evils of the cheap printing of the present day. *It is a curse.* We hope to change its influence. He had never been so alarmed as during his travels this summer. Every where had the vile trash, the *yellow covered literature*, and the cheap novels that are sent out from the presses in this city, been obtruded upon his notice. The country is flooded with it. When visiting "the Great Britain" a few days before, he found in its lowest depths a man perusing a vile publication. Go down this very Nassau-street and you will see unblushingly exposed in the windows of shops, books

and prints that not only shock the eye of modesty, but pandering as they do to the lowest appetites, are eminently calculated to deprave the mind and inflame the worst passions of the soul. He had made it a matter of conscience to look into this subject, and to see what was the character of these publications that are sent out in such vast numbers. The increase of this kind of books is dreadful; the stream runs blacker and deeper every day. Infidel books are published in vast numbers. They are translated from European languages and sold here in Nassau-street. The press is used here extensively to print Infidel publications for the South American States. He spoke of Eugene Sue's writings as being most dangerous: he has a wonderful power of exciting the basest passions of the heart. His "Wandering Jew" is said to be an attack upon popery, but it is also an attack upon the foundations of all religion, and we get something worse than popery when we take what Sue offers in exchange for it. He spoke powerfully upon the necessity of pastors uttering their loudest warnings against this kind of reading in public and private. He had thought it worth while to preach upon the subject, and to instruct his congregation as to what they ought to read. He would also use the fact that this corrupting and poisonous literature is so generally spread, as a powerful argument for circulating religious publications. In his opinion some of the publications of this Society, in a literary point of view, would yield to none, and might be given to the most refined and intelligent.

PECUNIARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SOCIETY.

While the financial condition of the Society was under consideration, the facts appeared, that for *six months* ensuing, the salaries of the one hundred and sixteen Colporteurs and other Agents now laboring for the Society, with their usual travelling expenses, will amount to about $22,000; books for gratuitous distribution $9,000; bills sanctioned and notes payable in bank $25,600; proposed foreign appropriations for the year $20,000, making $76,600 that should be paid before April 15. These facts, though surprising and alarming, did not depress the spirit of the meeting. They saw that the Society had been engaged in an aggressive work upon the kingdom of Satan—

that they had only entered fields which Providence had plainly opened for them. They were confident that the cause was dear to God and that he would sustain it. A new love for the Society seemed inspired in the breasts of all. One of the General Agents of the Society at Boston said he could not retire till he had made his own personal contribution. Others expressed the same sentiment; and with a noble generosity those present subscribed from their limited means the sum of $640; thus showing their appreciation of the work, and their unwillingness to have it curtailed in any of its extensive operations.

CONCLUDING EXERCISES.

The closing exercises of the meeting were of a devotional character. A number of brethren from the fulness of their hearts poured out their feelings of interest in all around them and the great cause in which they were enlisted. The hearts of all were touched. The presence of the Holy Spirit seemed to rest upon them. We felt that God was with us, and as a beloved German brother expressed it, like Peter on Mount Tabor, we could say, "Lord, it is good to be here."

The Hon. T. FRELINGHUYSEN closed the services in a most happy and effective address. He spoke of his deep emotion while sitting here. He had always regarded the colporteur work with the deepest interest, and all that he had seen of it increased his convictions that God means to magnify it to his own glory. The laborers are a consecrated body of men, who go forth to meet their fellow-men by the wayside and the hearthstones, carrying the best preachers the world has ever known, with which, accompanied by their faithful personal labors, they would present motives to lead sinners to Christ. It is a blessed instrumentality to multiply Harlan Pages over the world. While he was lying on his bed it was a happy thought that there were men at work, whose sole object was to bring the claims of God to the consciences of the people.

He felt it a spiritual privilege to be here; and referring to another precious meeting held here the last winter, said, I don't know what this upper chamber will get to be if we have many more such delightful meetings. He did not wish to know what the denominational differences of these brethren

were: they were, as he trusted, all one in Christ, and that was enough. The day is coming when God will bring them all home, with their arms full of the ingathered harvest to his own glory.

Mr. F. then led the hearts of all to the throne of grace. After singing the Doxology the senior Secretary pronounced the benediction, and the meeting adjourned. But the influence of that meeting will remain in the hearts of all who were present. They will carry it with them as they go to their fields, and we shall look, and not in vain we trust, with the Spirit's blessing, for outpourings of grace to follow them as they go out among the churches and the desolations of the land. Let each one see to it that the flame here kindled does not expire, and many an icy heart brought within their influence will melt, many a cold or lukewarm christian have the slumbering fire of sacred love awakened in their breasts.

We look back to this meeting with thankfulness and gratitude. During its session of nearly four days, not a jarring note was heard: one feeling of love and of devotion to the work of leading souls to Christ seemed to pervade every heart. It was stated at the close of the meeting that there were members of seven different evangelical denominations present, but not a word had been said that would have indicated it. We felt our hearts drawn out towards one another, and as we repeatedly bowed in prayer and joined our voices in songs of praise, we felt that it was a glorious work in which we were engaged, that it was blessed of God, and would succeed. We left the meeting with an increased determination to devote the energies that God has given us to the spread of his cause, and to carry the means of spiritual instruction and grace, as far as in our power, to those who are living without them, until he shall cause the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon the dark places of our land and world, and this moral wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose.